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Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3, 17, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28C, 28D, 28E, 28F, 28G, 33 and 35 related to business continuity management

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 3, 17, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28C, 28D, 28E, 28F, 28G, 33 and 35 related to business continuity management (A/63/359 and Corr.1). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The report of the Secretary-General was submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly, in section VII of its resolution 62/238, for a comprehensive report on business continuity, including in the event of a pandemic, that is complementary to and compatible with the wider enterprise resource planning and information and communications technology reform.

3. In paragraph 15 of his report (A/63/359 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General indicated that business continuity management is a management process that strengthens an organization's ability to respond to risks and to maintain continuity of critical business processes at a minimum agreed level following disruptive events. At the United Nations, the concept of business continuity management originated as a response to the need to ensure pandemic influenza preparedness, but it has since expanded to a multi-hazards approach, reflecting the multiplicity of risks currently facing the Organization and its increasing dependency on information technology systems. In chapter III, section D, of his report, the Secretary-General described the five main steps of business continuity planning.

4. According to the Secretary-General, for many years business continuity management was considered only superficially by the United Nations system.

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However, mounting interest in the concept in the public and private sectors prompted the Organization to devote more attention to it, particularly in the areas of safety and security, information technology and facilities management. Indeed, several United Nations system agencies have now adopted business continuity management plans and endorsed policy statements (ibid., para. 31).

5. As indicated in paragraph 32 of the report, a small Business Continuity Management Unit, located within the Office of Central Support Services, Department of Management, was established in 2007, following a decision made by the Senior Emergency Policy Team. The Unit, which currently comprises three temporary positions (Chief of Unit, Business Continuity Management Specialist and Administrative Assistant), is responsible for ensuring the viability of business continuity planning carried out by the United Nations Secretariat, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions and for coordinating business continuity planning with the United Nations organizations located in New York. The funding for the Unit's initial activities was accommodated within the discretionary authority granted to the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/283. Since no appropriations were approved for business continuity management-related activities for the biennium 2008-2009, the same funding arrangement was applied to accommodate the 2008 requirements.

6. In paragraph 54 of his report, the Secretary-General indicated that business continuity management is a well-coordinated initiative in the Secretariat and New York-based funds and programmes. In March 2008, a Technical Working Group on Business Continuity Management, the members of which include business continuity focal points from New York-based funds and programmes, the Business Continuity Management Unit and other relevant Secretariat departments, was established to provide a forum to discuss approaches to business continuity management. One of the aims of the Working Group is to develop guidelines for a standardized multi-hazards approach to business continuity management at United Nations Headquarters. In addition, as indicated in paragraph 31 of the report, some United Nations system organizations, including the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, have started to engage with different institutions from the banking sector on the development of a multi-hazards business continuity management methodology.

7. The Advisory Committee notes the efforts made to develop a uniform approach to business continuity planning at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and the regional commissions, as well as to coordinate a common approach with the United Nations organizations located in New York. **In the Committee's view, the Secretariat should draw upon the experience of other United Nations entities in formulating its business continuity strategy. Furthermore, given that business continuity management is a matter of system-wide concern, the Committee is of the opinion that it should be possible to achieve economies of scale through coordination among organizations within the United Nations system on relevant issues, including the use of backup centres for information and communications technology, the commissioning of consultants, the procurement of specialized equipment and medical supplies and training. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to pursue this issue within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for**

Coordination and to report thereon as part of the annual overview report of the Chief Executives Board.

8. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that while the United Nations Medical Services Division in New York was working closely with the New York State Department of Health on the specific issue of pandemic preparedness, further cooperation between the United Nations and the host country authorities on more general issues relating to business continuity planning was still required. **The Committee is of the view that cooperation with host country authorities at all duty stations is essential to protect the interests of all concerned and to ensure an effective and coordinated response to potential disruptions. The Committee therefore encourages the Secretary-General to pursue efforts in that regard as a matter of priority.**

9. In paragraph 70 (a) of his report (A/63/359 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to endorse the overall approach relating to business continuity management contained in his report. **The Advisory Committee recognizes the need to address issues relating to business continuity management. However, in the view of the Committee, the approach set out in the report of the Secretary-General requires further development and justification. The Committee therefore recommends that the Secretary-General refine his approach with a view, inter alia, to clarifying the relationship among business continuity management processes, the overarching risk management framework described in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/62/701 and Corr.1 and Add.1) and the proposals of the Secretary-General on information and communications technology (see A/62/793 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/62/510/Rev.1 and A/62/477), as well as the roles of the various actors in the process. In so doing, the Secretary-General should bear in mind the need to avoid a piecemeal approach to business continuity requirements (see A/62/7/Add.2, para. 8). He should also clarify existing and planned measures to ensure the continuity of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in the event of a serious incident or interruption.**

10. In this regard, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that some of the recommendations contained in the report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide, which have been endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives Board, would be reflected in the forthcoming report to the General Assembly. The Committee further notes that other recommendations made by the Panel, which are currently under review by a steering group of the High-Level Committee on Management, will be discussed by the Chief Executives Board in April 2009 with a view to their incorporation in a supplementary report to the Assembly.

11. **Until the issues referred to in paragraphs 9 and 10 above are addressed, the Advisory Committee is not in a position to recommend endorsement of the Secretary-General's approach.**

12. The Secretary-General's proposals would require additional post and non-post resources amounting to $4,692,400 for the biennium 2008-2009, of which $973,200 would be accommodated from within the overall resources appropriated for the biennium 2008-2009. The Secretary-General is requesting commitment authority for the net additional resource requirements of $3,719,200 under the following sections

of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009: section 17, Economic and social development in Africa ($93,300); section 20, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean ($221,800); section 21, Economic and social development in Western Asia ($574,000); section 27, Public information ($254,000); section 28C, Office of Human Resources Management ($132,400); section 28D, Office of Central Support Services ($1,670,900); section 28E, Administration, Geneva ($133,000); section 28F, Administration, Vienna ($234,700); section 28G, Administration, Nairobi ($277,400); and section 35, Staff assessment ($127,700), to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment). Table 1 of the report of the Secretary-General provides a summary of the proposed resources by object of expenditure.

13. In paragraph 70 (c) of his report (A/63/359 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to approve the establishment of 12 new posts to implement and maintain business continuity activities. Annex IV to that report sets out the proposed organizational structure and staff distribution of the Business Continuity Management Unit.

14. **With regard to the proposed establishment of six new posts within the Office of Central Support Services — four posts for the Business Continuity Management Unit (1 P-5 Chief of Unit, 1 P-4 Business Continuity Planning Specialist, 1 P-4 Business Continuity Training Specialist and 1 General Service (Other level) Administrative Assistant and two P-3 posts for the Office of Information and Communications Technology) — the Advisory Committee is not convinced that the establishment of a dedicated permanent capacity in this area is warranted at the present stage. However, in order to ensure that the progress achieved to date is not lost and that business continuity planning is incorporated into the Organization's standard operating procedures in case of a disruptive event, the Advisory Committee recommends establishment of a business continuity focal point in the Department of Management consisting of three positions: one P-5, one P-4 and one General Service to be funded under general temporary assistance. As to the information technology-related posts, the Committee points out that the Secretary-General's proposals on information and communications technology (see A/62/793 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/62/510/Rev.1 and A/62/477) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/63/487) are currently before the General Assembly. The Committee is of the opinion that existing and planned future capacity in the area of information and communications technology should be sufficient to meet the business continuity needs described in the report of the Secretary-General. Accordingly, the Committee recommends against approval of the two requested P-3 posts.**

15. The Secretary-General proposes the establishment of two Medical Officer posts (1 P-4 in the Medical Services Division of the Office of Human Resources Management and 1 P-3 in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)), as well as a General Service (Local level) post for an Administrative Assistant/Pandemic Team Assistant in ECA. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the functions to be performed by the Medical Officers would include pandemic awareness training, development and running of simulation exercises, monitoring of international preparedness trends and developments and liaison with local and international public health and medical authorities. The Committee was also informed that the Medical Services Division at Headquarters currently has one P-4 Medical Officer

specializing in infectious diseases and epidemiology, a position that is funded under general temporary assistance. **The Advisory Committee believes that the health and safety aspects of business continuity management are of particular importance in the light of the global influenza pandemic alert determined by the World Health Organization (WHO).**[1] **Furthermore, the Committee notes that the specialized functions to be carried out by the Medical Officers would require additional capacity. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly approve funding, under general temporary assistance, for three positions: one P-4 and one P-3 Medical Officer, as well as for one General Service (Local level) Administrative Assistant/Pandemic Team Assistant.**

16. The Secretary-General proposes the establishment of two new posts in the United Nations Office at Nairobi: a P-4 level Business Continuity Specialist and a General Service (Local level) Administrative Assistant to provide technical support and guidance to the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, as well as to ECA and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of two positions: one P-4 and one General Service (Local level) for the United Nations Office at Nairobi, to be funded under general temporary assistance.**

17. **The Advisory Committee recommends against the establishment of the proposed P-3 Information Technology Officer post in the United Nations Office at Vienna for the reasons given in paragraph 14 above.**

18. With regard to non-post resources, the Committee notes that a large part of the proposed additional resource requirements relates to the development of telecommuting capabilities and remote access for staff; however, the Secretary-General's proposals do not provide a clear picture of who is intended to utilize this technology. **In the Committee's view, the related requirements should be absorbed from within existing resources.**

19. **In view of its comments in paragraph 15 above regarding the importance of the health and safety aspects of business continuity management, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the resource requirements associated with the travel of medical staff.** The Advisory Committee enquired as to the cost of seasonal flu vaccines by location and the basis for the relevant budget estimates. It gathers that the cost of seasonal flu vaccine varies but queries the budgetary assumptions contained in the document, since it appears that the cost per vaccine would amount to $7 in Geneva, $8 in New York and about $11 in Addis Ababa (at current exchange rates). **Under the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommends that medical supplies and materials, including vaccines and antibiotics, be acquired from within existing resources. Further, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General take the necessary steps to ensure that vaccines are procured in the most cost-effective manner. To that end, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General consider the feasibility of system-wide supply contracts. Such contracts should**

[1] As at 2 December 2008, WHO has determined that the world is in alert phase three, which signifies that a new influenza virus subtype is causing disease in humans, but is not yet spreading efficiently and sustainably among them (see WHO website, at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/).

be sufficiently flexible to ensure the protection of the Organization's interests and, where appropriate, unused vaccines should be donated before they reach their date of expiration.

20. **With regard to possible future requirements for business continuity management, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a fully justified request for post and non-post resources in the context of the proposed programme budget.**

21. Taking into account its recommendations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of commitment authority for the net additional resource requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 in the amount of $1,236,700 as follows: $179,800 under section 17, Economic and social development in Africa; $200,400 under section 28C, Office of Human Resources Management; $467,800 under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services; $229,900 under section 28G, Administration, Nairobi; and $158,800 under section 35, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).